

If you're thinking that the updates you receive on the occupation of Iraq seem like déjà vu, you're absolutely correct. The U.S. House of Representatives voted in the spring to force the creation of a public timeline for winding down the conflict in Iraq, but Senate Republicans blocked it. That story has been repeating itself for years.

But Congress is not giving up. On July 10, more than two dozen House Democrats joined me in co-sponsoring [H. Res. 1329](#), which states, "It should be policy of the United States to accept the principle of setting a deadline or timetable for withdrawal of United States military forces from Iraq."

One new piece of information that should shake things up -- but unfortunately won't -- is the request by Iraq for a redeployment timeline. Iraqi officials in the past have suggested that American troops must eventually leave Iraq, but recently those calls have increased in frequency and volume.

Iraqis are finally grasping what so many Americans already understand: To fully invest Iraq in the process of rebuilding itself, the United States must begin to draw our troops out of the country and allow Iraqis to take control of their own lives. So it should be no surprise that the Iraqi government is now reluctant to sign a security agreement that does not include a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. soldiers.

It is clear that American soldiers cannot fight themselves into peace in Iraq; it will be Iraqis who determine when the violent internal contest for power, influence and wealth ends. As months slide by, it's becoming clearer and clearer that guns and bombs are not the solution for Iraq.

This year, I cosponsored [H.R. 5626](#), a bill making it clear that this administration is not empowered to negotiate any long-term security agreement with Iraq without Congressional consent. I also cosponsored [H.R. 4959](#), which demands that Congress be included in any long-term agreements made with Iraq.

Furthermore, I believe that Congress must continue to act to ensure that this administration does not stage an ill-fated action against Iran. To that end I have cosponsored H. Con. Res 33

to require explicit Congressional approval before any incursion into Iran, and [H.R. 3119](#) , a bill to prohibit the use of funds for military operations in Iran.

The best course of action for the United States is to engage with Iran diplomatically. Standing back and hurling insults does nothing to resolve the dispute over Iranian nuclear arms or to discover a workable solution to the raging violence in Iraq. For far too long we have been stuck in a counterproductive cycle of name-calling and brinksmanship.

A recent reversal of policy on Iran allowed U.S. Undersecretary of State William Burns to meet with Iranian diplomats in concert with European Union diplomats. This has come on the heels of several months of calls for the United States to engage in tough, meaningful diplomacy with Iran. Unfortunately, it appears that the recent flurry of diplomatic activity was not be as substantial as we would have liked.

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